

LONG ISLAND FORUM



The above reproduction of another beautiful watercolor was sent us as a Christmas present by the painter, Cyril A. Lewis. It represents, of course, a scene on Long Island as it was, not too many years ago. We ask our readers to identify in a letter-writing contest for prizes. See page 264 for details.

TABLE of CONTENTS

DREISER AND DRIFTWOOD MANOR	Thornton Frobisher, Jr.
FIRE ISLAND'S FISH FACTORY HERO	Douglas Tuomey
EARLY SCHOOL TEACHERS	Roy E. Lott
A RAIN WATER POND	Julian D. Smith
TALES OF THE WINTER SEASON	Kate W. Strong
WRITING ABOUT WRITING	READER'S FORUM

Mrs. Emily Bruen
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Readers' Forum

LETTER CONTEST

The Forum is offering cash prizes for the best letters sent to The Long Island Forum, Box 1568 which are postmarked no later than January 15, 1962.

The letters which must be limited to five hundred words or less, must identify the building pictured by Cyril A. Lewis on the cover of this issue; give something of its history and its present status. The letters will be judged on the basis of fact, style and interest.

The names of the judges and a repetition of the rules of the contest will be given in the January Forum.

Prizes offered are first \$25; Second \$10 and third \$5. Also ten one-year subscriptions to the Forum will be given to those winning Honorable Mention. The decision of the Judges will be final. Any Forum Reader is eligible to enter the contest. It is not necessary to be a subscriber.

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Dreiser and Driftwood Manor

MR. WILLIAM L. Miller, real estate broker since 1912, winced as the twelve o'clock whistle whined three minutes behind nearby Riverhead sirens, but right on time for Wading River, nestling at a comfortable distance from city ways on the Long Island Sound. Mr. Miller began: "That house you mentioned, why it's as sound as the day it was built. Mr. Robin told me himself that the wooden trim for the outside was put in hot storage for a year after it was purchased from the lumber company so it wouldn't warp. The concrete in the place is as good as new."

The house, rather mansion, that Mr. Miller was describing is one referred to by Theodore Dreiser in his short story, "Vanity, Vanity," Saith the Preacher. J. G. Robin, a former Wall Street tycoon, was revealed to be the author's "Mr. X," the owner of the fabulous dwelling described in the story, in a letter written by Dreiser to the publisher of the Long Island Forum. The mansion, now called "Driftwood Manor," is located in Baiting Hollow, just east of Wading River. Dreiser wrote:

"It was so unpretentiously

Thornton Frobisher, Jr.

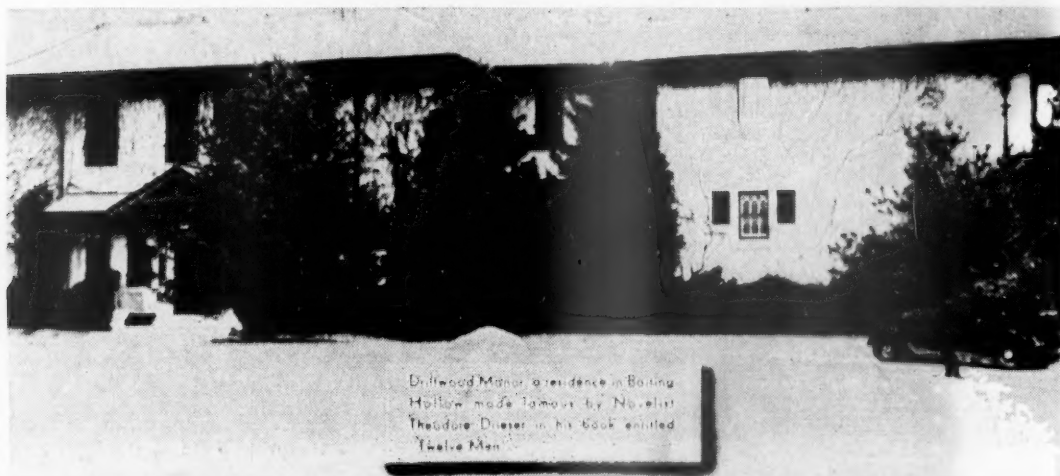
pretentious, so really grand in a limited and yet poetic way. Exteriorly its placement, on a rise of ground commanding that vast sweep of sea and sand, its verandahs, so very wide — great smooth floors of red concrete — bordered with stone boxes for flowers and handsomely designed stone benches, its long walks and drives but newly begun, its stretch of beach, say half a mile away and possibly a mile and a half long, to be left, as he remarked, 'au naturel,' driftwood, stones and all, struck me most favorably."

Today the house appears much the same as it did when Dreiser visited, except that it is now complete. As Mr. Miller said, the main building was built to last. Driftwood Manor has indeed outlasted the fortunes of its original owner, J. G. Robin, and of Alfred Wagg, another finance juggler and subsequent owner, who was wiped out in the 1929 crash. In between personal titleholders the property was in the possession of various banks and mortgage companies. A southern company holding title to the house

was itself dissolved. Driftwood Manor is now owned by Mrs. Arthur G. Meyer, but the property is being negotiated for by the Park Commission at the present time.

The main house of Driftwood Manor was constructed during the years 1907-8. No expense was spared. There are three floors. The ceilings on the ground floor are nine feet high. Many of the rooms are panelled with expensive hardwoods, and the elegant stairway is of cypress. The exterior of the house is stuccoed. The front lawn stretches for some quarter of a mile, rimmed at first by driveways and then woods. When one first sees the mansion, even the quarter mile of lawn does not diminish its hugeness. Possibly Dreiser considered the house an extension of, or a symbol of the raw intellect, wealth, and brief eminence of its once affluent, bohemian fabricator. Perhaps its massiveness like his own physical bulk; its art-laden interiors reflected his roughshod, yet passionate feeling for art and its cultured gardens, stretching out towards the Sound, revealed his reverence for aristocracy.

In portraying "X" or J. G.



"Driftwood Manor." Once the home of Theodore Dreiser's "Mr. X."

Robin in "Vanity, Vanity," Dreiser makes mention of the garden:

"Pointing to a bleak waste of sand between the house and the sea—and it looked like a huge red and yellow bird perched upon a waste of sand—he (Robin) observed, 'When you come again in the spring that will contain a garden of 40,000 roses. The wind is nearly always off the sea here. I want the perfume to blow over the verandahs.'"

If Mr. Robin did get to plant his roses, there is no evidence of them today. Instead there is a formal garden of hedges and figurines. The garden is located on the north or L. I. Sound side of the mansion, overlooked by the verandahs which Mr. Robin wanted perfumed, and stretches around, in a narrow band of cultivation to the west of the dwelling, culminating at the front door, which has a southern exposure.

At the end of the garden there is an iron bell with the inscription, "MARIA." Below this appears the date "1690." One cannot help wondering who among the gay, glittering assemblage — described in the story, drawn to Driftwood Manor by the mystery, hospitality, and opulence of its creator — rang this bell. Perhaps the Wall Street scapegoat himself tolled it with the dark realization that its relative timelessness was a sad comment on the transience of his own eminence.

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You have a wonderful publication. My husband looks for it every month and we save every issue.

Marie Harrower

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Douglas Tuomey

SIXTY YEARS ago, anyone cruising East in the channel running along the bay shore of Fire Island, would be bound to notice the stark and discolored brick chimney which reared its height some forty or fifty feet skyward. Lonesome and dreary looking, and as seemingly out of place as the first monument in a new cemetery, it nevertheless marked the site of as heroic a deed as was ever performed by a single man.

Had the curious beached his boat and approached this pile of masonry, his wonder would have been increased instead of satisfied; for it rose out of a jumble of twisted steel and iron, rusted wheels and shafts, and heavy, badly burned timbers, all half buried in drifted sand, and almost completely concealed by well-grown bayberry bushes, holly and eel-grass.

Strange indeed, this sign of a bygone industry, because at any point of the compass there existed not a single sign of man or any of his works. Far to the west the Fire Island lighthouse showed, and miles to the east the colony of Point O' Woods might be seen from the top of a high dune, but in between for mile after mile, there was nothing but the wilderness of the Fire Island of old. No dock or bulkhead welcomed the landing of the curious visitor, and no trail or path criss-crossed the area.

Many years ago this site swarmed with humanity. The chimney belched smoke, carts rumbled, gears ground and shafts turned as the machinery reduced the once great schools of menhaden to commercial fertilizer. Fleets of ocean-going craft paraded back and forth through the Fire Island inlet to drop their nets off shore and return laden with the ocean's bounty.

The processing of the fish was crude, and consisted mainly of shoveling the catch out



of the boats and into carts which were pushed to large hoppers, which in turn fed the shredding and grinding apparatus. Dried and bagged, the finished product was ferried to the mainland, from whence it was shipped by rail to farming communities throughout the country.

The entire plant covered some acres as it included not only the factory itself but supplementary buildings, narrow-gauge track, storage sheds and accommodations for the many hands required for the operation. Near the ocean end of the plant, a small but heavily constructed cottage, slightly elevated above the rest of the buildings, housed the caretaker who lived there through the winter and guarded the premises.

A lonelier and more forbidding occupation would be difficult to find anywhere in the world, because when the plant shut down for the winter there would be no human being within miles, and no means of communication. Patrick O'Connor, however, seemed quite at home. Like many of the emigrants from the land of the emerald lakes and the banshee, he relished the solitude, the whistle of the wind through the closed buildings and the weird calls of the sea-birds. On occasion one

of the surfmen from the life-saving station would cut across the dunes and drop in for a break in his lonely patrol of the beach, but this was about the extent of Patrick's social life.

Physically as well as mentally, Patrick was well fitted for the job. He was short and strong and as healthy as could be. The well stocked cottage, firewood in plenty, a store of pipe tobacco and the inevitable black bottle, were luxury to the man who had endured a poverty-stricken childhood.

Snow came early in the year of Patrick's heroic deed. Gale after gale whipped in from the ocean in endless procession, and he was kept busy during the short daylight hours shoveling the ever-drifting sand from doorways of the silent buildings, and once a week he would fire the boiler and turn the machinery for a few minutes to avoid the rust-freeze which rapidly binds bearings and gears unused for months.

A week before Christmas the already bad weather had settled down to a continuous thundering series of squalls and snow. The thermometer dropped to near zero and held there. The roar of the surf could be heard across the bay and on the mainland, as the seas crashed on the beach and

raced to the dunes. Mush-ice and floes ground and growled as it swirled ashore.

Patrick O'Connor was preparing for the night, after going through the usual ritual of knocking the ashes out of his pipe and banking the fire in his stove. As he turned down the blankets on his bunk, he became aware of a sudden silence outside, as though the gale had subsided. As he stood listening, the sudden crack of a cannon brought him to the door. Before he had it half opened a gust of wind almost blew it off the hinges, and the gale returned with increased fury. O'Connor knew what the cannon shot meant — a ship in distress; and from the direction of the sound, it would be on the beach almost abreast of his house.

Throwing on his heavy pea-jacket, O'Connor started for the beach, with head bent against the savage inshore gale. On reaching the dunes he saw the wreck. A two-masted schooner which had driven, all standing, almost through the breakers. A ghostly ship, sheathed in ice from bow to stern. The foremast had gone when she struck, the sails coated with ice littered the deck. Two dark spots floundering in the grinding mass of shore-ice could only be men.

Without a moment's hesitation, O'Connor slithered down the face of the dune and in a second was in icy water to his waist. The next sea drove him back against the dune, knocked him off his feet and the backwash swept him out and against the floundering man closest inshore. He grabbed the man, and made it in. He dragged him to an opening in the dunes, and dropped him in comparative safety.

Normally, this would have been enough, but not for O'Connor. Panting from the first struggle he returned, and seeing a dark spot still in the ice, he waded in again and brought out the second man. This one he thought was dead.

Meanwhile, the three other members of the crew of five

had seen the rescue from their perch on the bobbing bow of the schooner, and one by one they dropped off into the breakers and thrashed toward the waiting saviour. Helped by the shore-bound wash, sometimes carried out by it, but fighting and struggling every moment, O'Connor saved all five.

By the time the last man had been brought in, the first of the rescued seamen had recovered considerably, and with his help the doughty caretaker carried the others to his house, where a hot stove and dry blankets soon brought them to new life. No doubt the black bottle did its part.

The very old gentleman who told us this story, said that to the best of his knowledge O'Connor never received a reward for his heroism, and as a matter of fact did not think so much of it himself.

New President

The Trustees of the Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities announce the unani-

mous election of John Walden Myer to succeed the late Honorable W. Kingsland Macy as President of the Society. Mr. Myer has been a member of its Board since the first annual meeting in 1949.

Mr. Myer served as Director of the Museum of the City of New York from 1951 until he resigned in 1958. He is presently a Director of the Society of Architectural Historians and of the Archives of American Art. He graduated from Harvard in 1923.

Mr. Myer has long been a resident of Oyster Bay and his house there is one of the oldest and most interesting on Long Island.



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Early School Teachers

Roy E. Lott

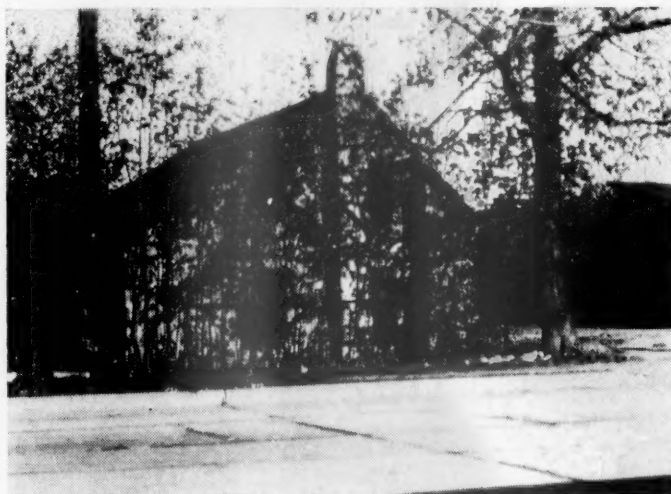
MANY OF the pioneers of Long Island were learned men. They had an inherent desire to provide at least a limited education for their children but to do so necessitated an humble and difficult beginning. Teachers had to be sought, housing for pupils provided and payment raised for both.

Very few teachers were numbered among the new arrivals and some of those migrated from settlement to settlement to instruct children of the area in which they tarried. Duties, other than teaching, were imposed on them so that they might more fully earn their pay.

The first recorded step in the history of education in the town of Huntington was on Feb. 11, 1657 when an agreement was entered into whereby "Jonas Houldsworth doth engage himself—for to teach such persons as shall be put to him for that end." Needless to relate, his salary was to be paid with the product of the soil, including firewood. It is stated in Vol. I, p. 22, of the Huntington Town record, that Mr. Houldsworth was required to act as Town Clerk.

Perhaps being a clerk had greater appeal to the teacher, or, there may have been a scarcity of students, for on June 12, 1662, we find him serving as the Clerk of Oysterbay. Then on Jan. 16, of the following year, he was performing that same task of clerk in Hempstead according to that town's record in Vol. I, p. 131 where it is stated; "At the said Towne meeting Jonas Houldsworth was chosen and hired to bee the Town Clerk for this next yeare, and it was granted to him to have forty shillings paid to him in corne for his wages when his yeare is expired."

On April 30, 1660 Mr. Houldsworth had served as a jurymen at Southampton in a trial on whaling rights. By



Old house next to Sash and Door Mill on Wall Street

Sept. 22, 1663, he had returned to that town. On pg. 224, Vol. II, of Southampton's printed records, this item appears; "Jonas Houldsworth shall have 35 lbs. for his schooling per annum for the term of two years, and his pay to bee answerable to ye pay ingaged to him by Hempstead, with allowance of 12 days in ye yeare liberty for his own particular occations." Probably Southampton's offer of a vacation induced Mr. Houldsworth to move again. An entry in that town's records of May 5, 1668 shows that a successor was appointed "—to do the work — which formerly Jonas Houldsworth did." As the "work" consisted of "keeping records of ye cattle," the migrating teacher probably acted as clerk while in Southampton.

Eleven years later, the East Hampton records, Vol. I, pg. 368, state; "The Towne have agreed with Jonas Houldsworth for to give him 33 lbs. for one year to teach schoole heere and the Towne is to pay him in beefe or oyle—for the one half and the other half is to be paid in oyle, pork hides, tallow, butter, or whalebone —." That was in April 1674. From 1681 to 1687 Mr.

Houldsworth signed legal documents, as a witness, in that town, after which we find no further mention of him.

Just where Mr. Houldsworth conducted his first classes in Huntington is not known, but on June 28, 1660, at a Town Meeting, "It was voted that Thomas Scidmore and Jonas Alder make a rate for the skull house." Apparently the town was to have its first school building. At a later date many one-room buildings were built when each area desired its own. Some of them still remain.

Throughout the Revolutionary War, schools probably received less attention, as we do not find too much recorded mention of them during that period. We do find that attempts were made to conduct classes where an opportunity was presented and the following is cited as an example. On July 4, 1876, Huntington held a centennial celebration of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The speaker of the day was the Hon. Henry Clav Platt. Mr. Platt was born in Huntington and became an outstanding lawyer and orator. Being a local resident, he was chosen as the speaker because of his knowledge of the

town. In his historic speech Mr. Platt said of the schools of that day; "Instead of the humble school, taught in the kitchen of Dr. Potter's dwelling, by Capt. Titus Bennett, who sailed a sloop in summer and taught children rude elements of education in winter, one hundred years ago, we point with pride to our schools throughout the Town."

Mention of Mr. Bennett as a school teacher during the 18th century prompted a search for data on that gentleman and his accomplishments. As the story unfolds, it would seem that to Mr. Bennett belongs the honor of nurturing the roots of education in Huntington. It is not generally known that Elizabeth Williams Potter gave up her kitchen during the winter for the edification of young people. We do know that she cared for the sick in that humble home while her illustrious doctor-husband, Col. Gilbert Potter, was in General Washington's secret service. That she managed to also house school children in one of her few rooms reveals another side of the character of that great lady. We wonder if she was influenced to cope with such inconvenience in the hope that some idle talk by the children might give her information of the enemy's actions (information to be imparted to Col. Potter during his nocturnal visits, so that he, in turn, might relay that knowledge to Gen. Washington), or, was it because, being an educated woman, she was glad to be able to furnish others with a keener sense of responsibility? We shall probably never know.

Of Capt. Titus Bennett, the sailor-teacher, we find that he was a man with diversified interests. He kept an account book that has been preserved and from it we learn the following: "May 26, 1774, Ezekiel Brush Dr. for 5 lbs. of Veal @ 1 sh. 3p. per lb.; 1 case & bottles, 15 sh; one barrel @ 2 sh. 9 p." In 1775, Mr. Bennett evidently practiced the art of tailoring, for his bill to Ezekiel was for "Making a jacket, 2 frocks, and one coat."



His bill of 1776 includes charges for tea and salt. Again in 1777 were bills for tailoring and in 1778, "One day's work, planting corn and butchering hogs." His first claim "for schooling Ezekiel's son Abel, 2 months and 24 days, @ 16 pence" was dated March 17, 1781. That charge also included "Wood for the period." Possibly that wood heated Mrs. Potter's kitchen.

Mr. Bennett's teaching career had started as early as 1775, when he "Schooled Treadwell Brush's children for 2 months and 27 days." Those same children were his pupils in 1777 and 1778, when William Gould was added to the class. In 1776 the names of parents with children at the "kitchen" school included; Jonathan Jarvice, John Brush (weaver), Abigail and Rebecca Havens, Silas Sammis, Rebecca Huls(e), Solomon Ketcham, Jonas Platt, the Widow Platt, Thomas Conklin, Jacob Brush, Philip Conkling, Ezekiel Conkling, Stephen Kelcy, Jonas Williams, Josiah Wheeler, Joshaway Bennett, John Wheeler, Charity Titus Ananias Conkling and David Conkling.

As the bills rendered by Mr. Bennett for teaching the chil-

dren of the above named parents were of different dates throughout the winter, it is probable that all the pupils did not attend classes at the same time. Each student remained at school for about one month. School continued up to and including 1782, after which we find no mention of "schooling" by Mr. Bennett.

During those years when classes were held at the home of Col. Gilbert and Elizabeth Potter, their son Nathaniel was a boy in his teens. Living in the environment of the schoolroom during those formative years, he no doubt became imbued with the need for education. Nathaniel must have become a good student, for in 1813, when he had reached the age of 52 years, he was made president of the Board of Trustees of his town and held that position for 22 years. During his term in that office, Wm. S. Mount, the noted Long Island Artist, painted Nathaniel's portrait and it graces the wall of the Huntington Historical Society.

In 1825, Nathaniel Potter

(Continued on Page 285)

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A Rain Water Pond

Julian Denton Smith

LAST SUMMER a rain-water pond endured on Jones Beach and revamped the natural life around it.

The pond spreads out and closes in—expands and contracts—according to the amount of rainfall. Our showers last summer have assumed the proportions of cloud-bursts and, consequently, the pond was spread out most of the season. It is never very deep, a bit less than one foot at the deepest spot. It has no inlet and no outlet and is stagnant—just a flooding of surface water.

This fresh-water pond is west of Parking Field No. 1 and between a couple of rows of isolated sand dunes. It is a reasonably clear section of beach so that much of the pond is open. It backs into the plume grass and only a guess can tell how far.

I did not see the rain-water pond at any time last summer when terns were not bathing in it, and that statement is good for rain or shine, day or night. Surely there must be some moment of observation when terns would be absent from the pond, but I have yet to discover that moment. They are always present.

The terns arrive singly and in groups. They hit the water carelessly and with a splash. They do not drop down head into the wind but come at any angle. In the water they dive, rear backward, slant sidewise, slop water under the wings, drench tail feathers, and throw water on their backs. I have seen no hint of the bathing being fun or a game. Each tern seems intent on his own efforts and not at all interested in another's. Each minds his own business entirely.

Usually the bathing is without comment by the birds. Only occasionally have I heard any bird talk and that would be a sort of satisfied chuckle,



a sound I have not heard terns make at any other time or place. There is definitely no conversation in the bath.

From time to time black skimmers drop into the pond along with the terns. Before landing on the water they make a few sweeps across the pond, sampling the water with their bills, barely touching the surface. Their bathing antics are the same as the terns but more vigorous. Maybe it is because the black skimmers are larger than the terns that their cleansing ritual seems accomplished with greater activity and gusto.

I have never seen black skimmers arrive singly at the pond. They will be in pairs, seldom odd numbers. They are likely to keep to themselves much the same as in nesting on the outskirts of a tern colony. They always seem to exist alongside the terns but never really with the terns. They get along as peacefully in the water with the terns as they do on land and neither appears to take notice of the other.

When the terns are finished with their bathing and cleaning, they usually swim to a small, dry, sandy beach on the north side of the rain-water pond. Some fly the short distance from water to beach. In the daytime they like to stand and shake themselves and preen without ceasing.

The young ones especially are determined to go over themselves feather by feather. The preening seems more important than the bathing and takes much more time.

During the drying and preening there is never a word. It will be done without fighting or argument and with no pushing or shoving. Some terns will take time to settle in the sand and enjoy the warmth and the sunshine. They may perhaps doze a bit.

The black skimmers are likely to forego the drying and the preening. They are apt to lift up out of the water, swing back and forth a few times at water level as though drinking, and then away to do their preening privately. If a pair of them do stop at the little beach, they seem nervous and ill at ease with the nearness of the terns. They seldom tarry for any length time.

When lack of rain reduces the size of the pond, all bird bathing comes to a halt. This seems to occur when the depth of water is less than four inches. Maybe the water temperature in the restricted pool climbs too high. Neither terns or black skimmers will use a small pond. I expect there is danger of injury while splashing in close quarters and in shallow water.

The vegetation in and a-

(Continued on Page 284)

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Readers' Forum

Childhood Books

I suppose we should write more often about articles in the Forum that strike a responsive chord, but it would probably mean a letter a month.

Miss Kate Strong, for instance, in the October issue mentions Harper's weekly for young people. Immediately my mind went back to a favorite book of my childhood, which came into my hands in quite a romantic way.

Around 1921 or so my family moved to the Hendrickson farm on the northwest corner of Hendrickson Avenue and Henry Street, Valley Stream. Prior to our occupancy, a man named Ballard from Rockville Centre had used it, I believe, as a summer home.

One day, while rummaging with my sister through old trunks left in the huge red barn, we came upon a green-bound volume of the weekly, Harper's Round Table, for years around the end of the 19th century. In it, I can remember, was a Munroe serial, "Rick Dale," which as a boy I thoroughly enjoyed. Favorites of mine, too, in this volume were "The Little Giant Stories" and a weekly cartoon called "The Imp in the Telephone."

I clung to the book for many years, always finding something new to enjoy as I grew older and broadened my experience. Then, in moving from one house to another, the dear old volume was lost forever.

Please thank Miss Strong for reviving pleasant memories.

Alonzo Gibbs
Bethpage

Powell House

Your recent articles about the Bethpage Purchase deserve congratulations. They show the purchase in its true significance and many, who recall similar efforts by the late Jesse Merritt, will express their appreciation. They should also bring about a lively interest.

In this regard, the letter by

William Wesche mentions old Powell houses in Farmingdale, in particular the house that stood, prior to 1955, at the intersection of Merritt Road and Hempstead Turnpike.

My mother recalls this house

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Long Island's Suburban Homeland

being called "the widow Powell's house." She says that before her time two maiden lady Powells, sisters, lived there and remembers the name of one as being Sara Ann. In my mother's girlhood, the house was known as Daniel Bedell's and, during my own boyhood, John Kruppenacker lived there. I was inside the house once and remember a very nice old fireplace in the kitchen. However, the Lawrence homestead, and the first house of any kind in the area, was known to stand further west on the Hempstead Turnpike.

Mention is also made of the original Powell house, standing on the east side of Merritt Road

since 1700, as having burned in 1850 and been subsequently restored. The hand-hewn beams in the house would scarcely support this fancy, which is, I suppose, an example of the legends that accumulate with time.

Legends are all very pretty, but the fact remains that, barring extraordinary measures, houses such as these do not survive in an area like Farmingdale. Private parties can seldom afford to use them as residences. They might give them to an agency willing to maintain them, which is rather a lot to expect. Otherwise they are often placed in the unfair position of destroying our traditions in order to pay the taxes required for the education of present-day youth.

Paul V. Wilson
Nottingham, Pa.

General Woodhull's Dwelling

General Nathaniel Woodhull's dwelling was destroyed by fire a few years after his death, as Henry Onderdonk, Jr. stated. This is confirmed by Miss Ruth Woodhull Smith, a great-great-granddaughter of the General. Family tradition adds that a portrait of him was lost in the fire; Thompson's "History of Long Island," 1st ed., p. 504, mentions the fire in saying that "most of his papers" were burned. The exact date is not known.

The house pictured in Eberlein's "Manor Houses" opposite p. 116 as the "General Nathaniel Woodhull House" was not his. The photograph is of a home built for the General's daughter Elizabeth some time after she married General (and U.S. Senator) John Smith. For a story on Elizabeth and John see Forum for October, 1956, and comments in the issue following.

The original General Woodhull house stood on the south side of Neighborhood Road between Hemlock and Daisy Avenues, in what is now Mastic Beach.

Elizabeth's home was on the corner of Neighborhood Road and Washington Drive. In a speech addressed to the D.A.R. in the 1930's, the historian Lil-

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lian Raynor said, "The old locust trees near the house have a history which I heard Mrs. Betsy Lawrence relate. She was the last lineal descendant of Gen. Woodhull to reside on the estate (ie., in Elizabeth's house). She said that the trees grew from seeds brought from the Hudson Valley by members of the family returning to the estate after the war was over."

In the early 1930's, Elizabeth's house was swamped in the tide of real estate development sponsored by the newspaper "Brooklyn Citizen." The newspaper offered small lots and subscriptions in a package deal. After standing as a derelict for a time, the house was torn down.

We might add that Mather's "Refugees" repeats the common error, p. 641, labelling Elizabeth's house as the General's. On a later page, however, Mather admits there was a "former house."

While on the subject of errata, we will use this opportunity to correct a misprint in the October, 1956 story mentioned above; on page 185, col. 3, for "1776" read "1777." And in the Sept., 1961 issue, p. 199, col. 2, for "Miss Bartlette" read "Mrs. Bartlette."

Chester G. Osborne
Center Moriches

The Powell House

Today I received happily, the October issue and enjoyed especially the thoroughly researched and accurately detailed article by the Gibbs on the Bethpage Purchase.

Also, William Wesche's letter is interesting and I thank him for his reference to me as an authority. Rising to the bait, I must ask where in the world he ever got the idea that the present Thomas Powell house replaces a burned one lost in 1850. I'm sure that this is not the case.

My husband, the late Jesse Merritt (Nassau County Historian for more than twenty years) was a direct descendant of Thomas Powell. His father, grandfather and many more ancestors were born in that house. He always said it was the original. His father was born before 1850 — family tradition was strong—moreover, the structure, especially in the attic is evidence of construction

of a much earlier period.

Fire did destroy, about 1899, the house across the road, built by Thomas Whitson, ward or apprentice of Thomas Powell, about 1700. Thomas Whitson was also an ancestor of Jesse Merritt. My husband, then a boy, and his family barely escaped into the night. His parents at once began the building of the present Victorian house on the same site and I live in it today—across the road from the Powell House.

Besides the loss of furniture, Quaker bonnets, spinning wheels in the attic, books and diaries, gone up in smoke were the original surveys of the Bethpage Purchase made by Samuel Willis (made 1732) and a little later by Ketcham. They were not recorded. There were, however, copies at Albany in the files of appealed title cases and in some law offices in New York City. My husband often said that his early interest in history was greatly stimulated by visits of lawyers to his home (before the fire of course) to consult and copy surveys.

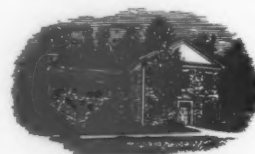
My husband wrote many articles about the Powell House in his capacity as County Historian, Town of Oyster Bay, and

Village of Farmingdale historian. He also served on the committee of three who compiled the Oyster Bay Town Records, all of which devoted much space to the old house.

He recently concluded one article as follows: "The house stands, level and true, after two-hundred and fifty years of happily sheltering humanity."

Mabel W. Merritt
Farmingdale

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Tales of the Winter Season

*A True Tale By
Kate W. Strong*

IT WAS in December of 1896 that I was coming home from boarding school. I had joined my sister and we took the ferry from New York to Long Island City (tunnels under the river were unheard of in those days). There we boarded the train to Setauket. It began to snow and blow, which seemed to bother the train a good deal, so we were an hour late reaching the station.

Father was not feeling well and had sent two of the men with the carriage to meet the train. One of them was old Jimmie, a Civil War veteran, who did all the jobs around the home for us. The horses were nearly frantic with the cold but the men had evidently put something inside them to keep them warm. We managed somehow to get into the carriage despite the plunging horses. We also squeezed in a friend for whom there was no room in the livery wagon that met the train.

The roads were still clear enough and we left the friend at her house and had no trouble until we turned toward the bay and faced the storm. Dick, the nigh horse, a lazy fellow, had no idea of heading into the storm; pushing to one side he forced his mate into the gutter and the carriage turned over into the snow drift. Fortunately there was no division between the front and back seats in the carriage so we could scramble out the front.

Then old Jimmie took my sister, who was not very strong, and helped her through the drifts to the nearest house and over and over he kept saying "Now be BRAVE, Miss—be BRAVE, Miss!" I struggled through the drifts alone as the other man had to care for the horses. Friends took us in gladly, gave us supper and put us to bed. The next morning Father sent after us in the sleigh.



In those days, in travelling, you always wore kid gloves which must fit so as to show never a wrinkle. My hat was not built for sleigh riding; I had to hang on with both hands and I was nearly crazy with the pain in my hands by the time I reached home but ice water thawed them out without harm.

To return to the family of the night before, they heard the train whistle at the station and couldn't imagine what kept us but finally they heard the horses and old Jimmie shouting at the top of his lungs: "Ten men couldn't have done it." I suppose as to righting the carriage. The men had taken the horses off and let them pull them home by the reins. How and when the carriage was dug up and brought home, I do not remember. I only know it served us well for many years.

People are often surprised by a thundershower in mid-winter but I remember a ferri-ble one when I was a little girl that came between Christmas and New Year's Day. It was the night when all was ready for the Sunday School Christmas tree. Seeing the storm coming up, my father and one of the men went off in the sleigh to close the church. Once the lightning struck so close, that the horses were paralyzed with fright and it was with difficulty that they persuaded them to go on. At home, mother was reading nursery rhymes to me out of a book with a blue cover. I suppose it was the snow, but with

every lightning flash the room turned as blue as the cover of that book. Mother wouldn't let me see that she was frightened but she must have been thankful when she heard those sleighbells.

Usually on New Year's Day we only went to call on my aunts nearby, but one New Year's Day, also when I was a little girl, my Father decided that the sleighing was so perfect, we would go and call on the Misses Mount and their brother in the old house in Stony Brook, so we all piled into the sleigh. We had fur robes over the seats and over our knees and hot bricks wrapped in newspaper to keep our feet warm. All the ladies being little, carried muffs — I was very proud of mine. It was ermine, with such lovely little tails! When we reached there they were delighted to see us and also the bricks were carried to the kitchen to be heated for the return journey.

When we went into the sitting room, I was much excited over the fireplace which was so shallow that the fire on the andirons was actually in the room, yet the smoke went up the chimney. Miss Evalina explained that at one time big fireplaces had not been considered fashionable so the fireplace had been built up but it still entered into the big chimney which gave it proper draft. Later Miss Evalina took me into the long parlor and showed me Mr. William Mount's picture of a tramp trading hats with a scarecrow which is now in the Suffolk Museum in Stony Brook.

I don't know what they call it now, but she called it "Fair Exchange No Robbery." On the way back to the sitting room I saw a broken Christmas tree ornament and I begged for it and kept it for years in remembrance of that perfect New Year's Day.

A VISIT TO SHELTER ISLAND

They watched the ferries ricochet in slips;
An osprey (thought they) flew
Over the oaken high side, wide
Of beaches dipping stones and granite chips.

Beyond the wind-warped bay backed up
By sedge, say, can one mount
Sylvester Manor's ancient steps? No, no.
No tourist can now go beyond
The Quaker cemetery. Oh



The Sylvester Mansion from a sketch by W. O. Stevens

Damn! they said, we'd like to see
Where Holmes and Tyler, Ole Bull,
Longfellow, Lowell, fanciful,
Scratched signatures kept under glass. Alas,

The Curious do trample stoutest grass,
Destroy one's privacy, so signs
Warned against entry. Cruising cars policed
The roads; and minus-gate gate posts at least

Gently repelled. At length, back on the shore,
They thought how Captain Kidd purloining pig,
Once came with cutlass, rakish periwig,
And, bold of manner, saw the manor more.

— Alonzo Gibbs

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Old Glen Cove

I have been receiving the Forum for three years. I look forward to every copy. Both my husband and myself come from families who pioneered on Long Island from the 1600's.

In the July Forum there was a story about Glen Cove. I spent my early childhood there. We lived in a large house called the Ingram House on Continental Place. My grandmother was Mrs. William Fitting and she ran the boarding house while my two aunts, Marge and Louise Fitting, helped in the dining room.

Glen Cove was then growing fast. The millionaires were building their estates all along L. I. Sound from Glen Cove to Oyster Bay. Gama Fitting used to board the builders, architects and workmen. It was a great boom for Glen Cove.

Later on Gama bought a large house two doors away from the Ingram house near Continental Court where all the houses were then owned by the Ladue Leather factory. We used to play all sorts of games against the board fences that ran along the Court. My uncles kept a big bobsleigh under the front porch. He used to start his ride on Thomason Park Hill.

My father operated a food concession — we used to call it a hot dog stand — on the Landing Beach where the big summer hotel was. I can remember J. P. Morgan's black yacht lying off the breakwater.

Gama Fitting owned a large motor boat. We used to load tents and other gear on it and sail across the harbor to Sands Point where we camped out and dug clams along the shore and when we got home Gama would make us delicious clam pie.

Sometimes I had to take my father's supper to him. I used to take the open trolley which ran down Glen Street and up School Street. The ride was five cents right to the Landing. Some evenings when I was going to see Pop I'd see young men helping him overboard for a swim. Despite the fact that he had no legs Pop was a wonderful swimmer. Everyone in Glen Cove called him "Pop Bucky" Fitting.

Madeline Fitting Conklin
Millbrook, N. Y.

Writing About Writing

THE PUBLISHING program now being undertaken in Port Washington by Ira J. Friedman, Inc. provides good news and future good reading for those interested in Long Island history. Some, if not all of the items should be invaluable to teachers and to parents who want to have their children aware of our heritage.

Last year Ira Friedman and his son-in-law, Cornell Jaray, brought out a reprint of "The Evolution of Long Island" by Ralph Henry Gabriel, an invaluable economic study of the development of our land from geologic origins to changes wrought here by early settlers, the change to specialization in farming, manufacturing, etc.

Now the firm has announced a reprint of another great book, the late Jacqueline Overton's "Long Island's Story" plus and this is a big plus—a sequel "The Rest of the Story" by Bernice Marshall, both in one volume. Mrs. Marshall is the author of "Our Community, Nassau and Suffolk," recently reviewed in this column.

We've just read the proofs of "The Rest of the Story" and it is quite a story, from 1930 and well told. Her style differs somewhat from Miss Overton's and we think this is partly due to the periods of history about which the ladies wrote. From 1930 on the development of Long Island has been so tremendous in population, industry, highways, parks, etc. that the telling of it must be different from the telling of an early Dutch Christmas, for example.

Mrs. Marshall reviews Depression days on the Island, the great works such as State Parks to help employment; she gives a vivid description of the '38 Hurricane, The World's Fair at Flushing and the effect of World War II on industrial development, particularly in the aircraft in-



dustry with ensuing population increases.

She tells of the landing of German saboteurs at Amagansett, the gigantic Levitt housing developments and the changes in County governments made necessary to accommodate thousands of new residents. There are succinct explanations of the duck industry, farming methods, the work done by Sperry, Grumman, Republic, etc. and the Brookhaven Laboratory to meet the requirements of our space age.

The price of the new "Long Island's Story" is \$6.95.

Time does not permit us to review other items, and some we have not yet seen. Ira Friedman is also reprinting Benjamin F. Thompson's history in three volumes and "A History of the New York Iroquois" by William F. Beauchamp.

IT'S ABOUT time we caught up on the last two issues of the Nassau County Historical Journal. The summer number had in it a scholarly article "The Division

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of the Towns of Hempstead and North Hempstead" by Harriette B. Norris. The division was a difficult affair stemming from differences of opinion and loyalties during the Revolution. It took some forty-four years to iron out matters and the author illustrates the history of this by quoting early sources and commenting thereon. She concludes:

"As we have seen, the reasons for separation lie in the conflicts of the colonial and revolutionary generations. There are few who know, and it makes little difference in 1961 when our interests are attracted by other and, to us, greater matters, how the demarcation line between the towns of Hempstead and North Hempstead was drawn because of tumult and strife. The passing of time eventually takes care of all such things."

In the same issue is a reprint of "The Long Island Motor Parkway" by Louise Carter Smith. She tells of the pioneering of William K. Vanderbilt, Jr.; she tells of the first races and the excitement and tragedy that accompanied them.

Well do we remember the Motor Parkway—the narrow, not too smooth but, save for occasional toll booths, a long stretch of unimpeded traffic. The article is a short history of the automobile as well as the Parkway.

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OTHER NASSAU roads are discussed in the Summer issue by Semon H. Springer. This article we found most interesting—well written and containing a wealth of material about the beginnings of the Jericho Turnpike, the Merrick Road and other highways known to all of us!

The second article in this issue, "Collectors Are Historians Too," by Arthur L. Hodges, president of the Nassau County Historical Society, is also a reprint. Anyone who collects anything should read this one since it justifies a hobby—in some cases a mania.

Mr. Hodges conclusion is well worth quoting.

"So the collector of old materials proves his worth as he brings these things together and prevents their being lost or thrown away. In time to come, as the face of material Long Island continues to change, the only real evidence of how people lived or what they thought will best be found in these collections. Even the recent past of which so many of us have vivid recollection, will become a part of the older past as the years swiftly pass by and the events so familiar to us will be subjects of research and study by the use of newspapers and documents of our own time wherever they then may be stored."

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ing our lifetime has truly been breathtaking. Country roads are highways, open fields bristle with apartment buildings, factories and whatnot.

Brooklyn, which is geographically part of Long Island despite tunnels, bridges and claims to the contrary, has changed a great deal physically but even so in the national and racial backgrounds of its residents. This has been well illustrated by the appearance in recent years of novels about German, Spanish, Jewish, Italian, Negro and Irish family life in Brooklyn. We've reviewed many of these books in this column.

A novel—perhaps it might be called a series of sketches—by Elick Moll, "Memoir of Spring," is one of the best. It deals with the lives and adventures, happy and sordid of Jewish people of South Brooklyn not too many years ago. A sensitive, finely written book with a far cheerier outlook on life than many like it—it afforded us a pleasant hour or so of reading.

"Three Novels" by Daniel Fuchs is a fiercely realistic trilogy dealing with very seamy, very unhappy lives. Gangsters and death play a prominent part. Though it is exceptionally well written, we've read so many books like the "Three Novels."

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They have been compared to the "Studs Lonigan" books by James T. Farrell. If you liked Farrell or Dos Passos perhaps you'll like Fuchs. The publisher is Basic Books.

WE WISH all our readers a very Merry and Happy Christmas time. It might be well for all of us to remember, no matter what our religious background, that Christ was the Prince of Peace.

—C. J. M.

The Earliest Days

Although in many circles doubts have been expressed about my grandfather, Cornelis Simon van Aartsen really being my grandfather, the fact that my mother was one of his daughters, should make it clear that all doubt on that score can be eradicated.

Besides, some hereditary characteristics, such as disregard for exactitude in statements of fact, of which traces allegedly have been found in the writer, would

be further proof of our relationship.

Whatever the case may be, I shall endeavor to relate the things pertaining to the earliest days on Long Island that my grandfather told me, to the best of my memory and ability.

It seems that my great-great-grandfather, of which early settler my grandfather told most of his stories, had gotten hold of a wooden leg that once belonged to Peter Stuyvesant. It was slightly worn and so just fitted my great-uncle Kees. Oom Kees had lost a leg in a weird accident involving a widow, a high window sill and a shotgun, of which the details have been obliterated by time.

The wooden leg came in very handy at planting time on the farm, my grandfather said, for Oom Kees would stomp along over the plowed ground, making a hole with each step with his wooden leg, and my aunt Babette (she was supposed to be one of the van Bolster girls, but

my grandfather said she was really a Stuyvemeier) would walk behind Oom Kees and drop a seed into each hole. If anything ever came up, my grandfather did not say.

The wooden leg was supposed

(Continued on Next Page)

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to have been bought at an auction sale they called a "veiling" at Coenties Slip, on Manhattan Island. Grandfather also told me that Oom Kees' wooden leg came in very handy for quail hunting, of which he was very fond. He would stick that pegleg an inch or so into the ground so as to pivot rapidly to get more shots in as the birds rose. How he was able to reload his flintlock so fast, my grandfather refused to say.

Oom Kees had one son named Teunis, but everybody called him Foolish because he aspired to be the village idiot. He studied hard for it, but he never attained his goal, for the post was filled and there were no demands for his services. The old idiot refused to die or give up his post. Teunis was not able to apply in another district for in those early days there were no other districts.

Getting back to the part of the auctions or "veilings," the following may be of interest: The Dutch were never considered backward, but this one thing they did, and do, backward. At our auctions we start from the first bid upward, and a clever auc-

(Continued next page)

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tioneer can through skills and tricks encourage the customers to raise their bids. But the Dutch way is an improvement, for they start with a large dial on which a hand moves downward from a too-high figure. When the hand reaches a figure that seems fair to a prospective buyer, he can "stop the clock" by pushing a button at his seat. I think that this way is instrumental in preventing collusion or at any rate, make it more difficult. Still today, in Holland to my own knowledge, the veillings of flowers, fruit, fish and other produce are held in a covered amphitheater through which a small canal or sloop flows. The loaded punts move into view and stop under the clock, one at a time. The auctioneer describes and praises the merchandise and starts the clock. When a buyer is satisfied with the price he stops the clock and his price and name appear on a large board.

My grandfather says that he invented this way of "down-pricing" but I did not believe him. In the first place there were no electric buttons to push in his time, and in the second place I did not believe him when he said that the buyers used little tin horns instead, and in the third place I know that my grandfather was an accomplished prevaricator and that he held a degree of "mentiroso suma cum laude" from Fingir University.

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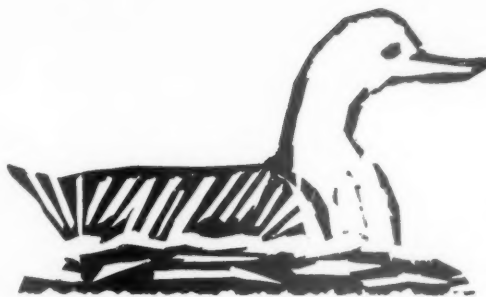
A Rain Water Pond

(Continued from Page 273)

round the rain-water pond looks to me always in good condition. The plume grass is ranker and the beach grasses more luxuriant. There are some kinds of grasses near the pond that I would call salt hay and black grass. All of these are definitely taller and more vigorous than the same growing in the usual dry locations. I have not found any plants growing at or in the fresh-water pond that do not grow on other parts of the beach. There appears to be nothing new in the pond such as the sphagnum moss found in the fresh-water pools at Sunken Forest on Fire Island.

Under the microscope quantities of single-celled and connected - celled plants and animals show in the stagnant water. At times these form a scum or blobs on the surface of the rain-water pond and many kinds attach themselves to the bottom in a haphazard way. If one wades in the pond, marsh gases bubble up with a typical H₂S stink.

No fish exist in the pond as they have no way of coming to it. I have found no snails. Nor have I seen any frogs or toads in the area. No doubt these are present but I have not found them. There are plenty of hard black beetles running around on the bottom of the pond particularly in the shallowest, warmest water. Surely this must be an air-breathing beetle but I have



missed seeing one rise to the surface to get rid of a used-air bubble and take on one of fresh air. The pond would be a good place for snakes but, I guess, all snakes have long since gone from Jones Beach.

A silly mamma duck has been foolish enough to build her nest, lay her eggs, and hatch out a family in the plume grass beside the little pond. By what half-witted quirk of the imagination could that old duck have figured there was enough nourishment in that small pond of stagnant water to feed her on-coming family! Occasionally I see the family swimming along one behind the other. The line had nine in it to start, now it is six—the mamma duck and five little ones. It is still beyond my comprehension what that little family finds to live on in that two-by-four rain-water pond!

I have been wondering what got the three little ducks. I am wondering no more for I have seen a mink. If one of them is around, there are more. I sat up on the top of a dune putting this story together when out of the corn-

er of my eye I saw something move. Along the edge of a bayberry thicket about four feet away a cinnamon brown animal made along. It looked like a brown edition of a thin and emaciated chipmunk. I remember a white spot somewhere under the chin and a black tip to the tail.

The mink must have been one born last spring and grown to about fourteen or fifteen inches—the tail perhaps two-fifths of the entire length. He moved along in a rather soft, flowing fashion like a blacksnake does. I do not believe he noticed me and I did not so much as wink an eye for I had never seen a real live mink at close range. This mink could be responsible for the disappearance of the three little ducks although he looked like he had not had a decent meal in a month.

No one should approach that fresh-water pond unless fully and completely prepared to encounter mosquitoes. It would be inviting disaster to venture near in bathing trunks for these things with wings are enormous, he-man mosquitoes. They are not the little,

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common, colorless, transparent, sissy type but are big, black and bold. When they light on you, you feel them, you know it. They are heavy. When they bite, it is like the jab of the needle for a shot of penicillin. Mere brushing will not get them off, a scraping is required. By day they are visible massed and waiting; by night there is no warning unless you have extra good ears to catch the low, threatening, menacing hum.

Those rain-water pond mosquitoes are for the birds — gee, whiz, maybe that is what the duck family is living on!

Early School Teacher

Continued from Page 272)

served as an overseer of the poor. While in that capacity he witnessed the inability of the poorer children to have an advanced education. Determined to alleviate that condition, he willed a large portion of his extensive fortune to the Huntington Academy to be used for the benefit of those who could not afford extended education in private schools. That endowment came to be known as the "Potter Fund." That fund served its purpose until high school was available to all students. It was recently assimilated in the general school monies. Lists of names of students assisted during the life time of the fund are in the archives of the town historian's office.

The Potter-assisted Academy is long since gone, having been razed in 1844 but its influence, as well as the names of worthy people, lives on. Elizabeth Potter died Nov. 11, 1811 at the advanced age of

83 years and is buried in the Huntington Memorial Cemetery close by her husband Col. Gilbert and her son Nathaniel. So that her deeds may not be forgotten, her grave is honored every Memorial Day by a group of young people, some of whom are students at today's successor to that 1793 Academy. Titus Bennett did not fare so well. Although he spent his off seasons with his wife and nine children while teaching school during the winter, the impelling lure of the sea had taken most of his time. Possibly he found the maritime occupation more lucrative but that vocation

proved his Nemesis. While boarding his sloop Defiance, which was lying at Everly's wharf at Charleston, South Carolina, nine o'clock at night, Feb. 6, 1791, he slipped from the boarding plank and was either killed by the fall or drowned. He was buried in that city the next day.

Of Jonas Houldsworth, that pioneer in his field, we have no knowledge of his later career. He had served the towns of Suffolk Co. for 30 years. Perhaps he was in some way rewarded for founding the school system in some towns and encouraging its growth in others.

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In 1957 when I acquired the Jones Manor house situated on the perimeter of Cold Spring Harbor, it had been unoccupied and practically unguarded for many months. These facts, plus the remoteness of the mansion and the legendary wealth of the Jones family, quickly encouraged thieves and looters to thoroughly ransack the home and to remove furnishings and other items of value. Some who sought gold settled for taking radiators, electric light fixtures, or copper gutters and there was much evidence of wanton destruction in the slashing of padded furniture, breaking of panelled walls and the forcing of every lock and cabinet drawer.

Strewn knee deep on the floor of many of the 50 rooms were papers of all sorts; bundles of checks, receipts, bills, maps, deeds, magazines, newspapers, manuscripts, diaries, books, photographs, ship charters, stock certificates, etc., many of them bearing early dates, some more than 100 years old. They were all in a jumbled mess for they had obviously been well scouted by many persons seeking anything of value and while my main interest was to quickly clean up the premises, I did take time to salvage quite some items—particularly those of early dates. While most of the material pertained directly to members of the Jones family, there were some items of general interest, including the following:

25th Annual Report Queens County Agricultural Society — 1866. This report gives particulars of the acquisition of the Mineola Fair grounds and the fine membership cooperation in preparing the cite for the first annual fair at that location. Also, two premium lists of the Society's Fairs for 1871/2.

Map of Long Island R. R. System with boat connections of the Montauk S. S. Co.—1904.

Telephone Directory — Central Long Island — June 1918.

New Country Life — May 1917. Very fine printing job in this magazine.

Among the stock certificates those of local interest included: Manetto Hill Club—Feb. 1906.

(Continued on Back Page)

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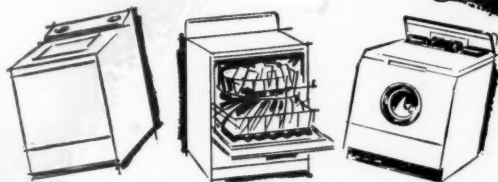
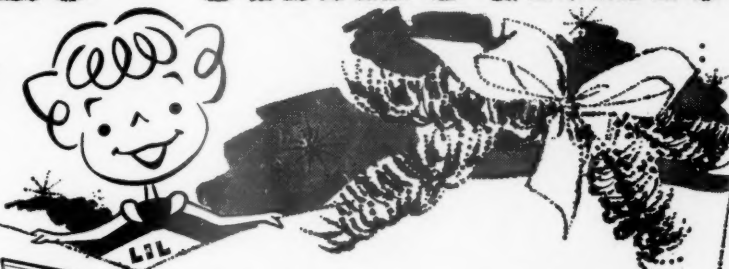
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Note: Bailey's 2-volume Island History and Historic Long Island in Pictures, Prose and Poetry are out of print.

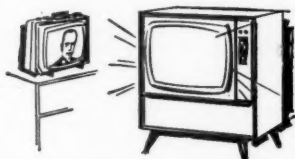
Take a leaf from **LIL's** book and give

APPLIANCES this CHRISTMAS

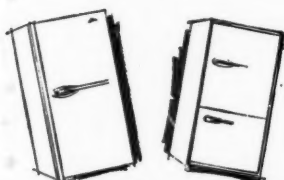
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(Continued from page 286)
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